

What is claimed is:

1. A method for renting to a customer a self-storage unit located at a self-storage facility, said method comprising the steps of:

establishing customer contact with a remote manager when the customer enters a customer service area proximate the self-storage facility so that the customer and manager can communicate using a communication link;

recommending a self-storage unit to the customer;

facilitating inspection of the recommended self-storage unit by the customer;

and

establishing a self storage rental agreement between the customer and the self-storage facility under the guidance of the remote manager.

2. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein said step of establishing a self storage rental agreement includes the insertion of data onto the rental agreement by the customer, and including the step of verifying the inserted data by the remote manager.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the communication link comprises a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web or video connection.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of establishing customer contact further comprises the step of automatically telephoning the remote manager when a customer service area door contact is activated.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of establishing contact further comprises the step of telephoning the remote manager when the customer activates a push button switch.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of establishing contact further comprises the step of automatically telephoning the remote manager when the customer picks up a telephone receiver.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of recommending further comprises taking into account storage needs of the customer, finding a self-storage unit which can accommodate the storage needs, and recommending to the customer a self-storage unit size that can accommodate the storage needs of the customer.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of facilitating inspection including the step of remotely opening an access gate to allow the customer access to the recommended self-storage unit.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of facilitating inspection includes opening an access gate, viewing the customer through an on-site camera as the customer approaches the recommended self-storage unit, and opening the recommended self-storage unit so that the customer can inspect the unit.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of establishing a rental agreement further comprises the step of:

directing the customer to fill out a rental agreement form identifying a self-storage unit selected for rental by inserting personal information about the customer, and indicating a method of payment.

11. A method for renting a self-storage unit located at a self-storage rental unit facility, said method comprising the steps of:

automatically telephoning a remote manager when a customer enters a customer service area at the self-storage unit facility so as to enable the customer and remote manager to communicate using a communication link;

establishing the storage needs of the customer;

selecting one or more self-storage units at said facility that can accommodate the customer's storage needs;

communicating to the customer said one or more self-storage units that can accommodate the storage needs to the customer;

opening an access gate to said one or more self-storage units;

viewing the customer as the customer approaches said one or more self-storage units;

opening at least one of said self-storage units so that the customer can inspect said at least one self-storage unit; and

establishing a self storage rental agreement between the customer and the self-storage facility under the guidance of the remote manager.

12. A system for renting a self-storage unit located at a self-storage unit facility, said system comprising:

means for establishing contact with a remote manager when a customer enters a customer service area proximate said self-storage facility so as to enable the customer and the remote manager to communicate using a communication link;

means for recommending to the customer a self-storage unit adequate to meet the customer's needs;

means for allowing the customer to inspect the recommended self-storage unit;  
and

means for establishing a self storage rental agreement between the customer and the self-storage facility.

13. The system of claim 11 wherein the means for establishing contact further comprises a telephone connection between the customer and the manager.

14. The system of claim 11 wherein the communication link comprises at least one of a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web and video connection.

15. The system of claim 11 wherein the means for recommending a self-storage unit further comprises a telephone connection for communicating the self-storage unit.

16. The system of claim 11 wherein the means for allowing the customer further comprises a gate access controller interfaced to a telephone network.

17. The system of claim 11 wherein the means for establishing a self storage rental agreement further comprises a rental agreement drop box for depositing completed rental agreement forms.

18. A system for renting a self-storage unit comprising:  
means for automatically telephoning a remote manager when a customer enters a customer service area of a self-storage facility wherein the customer and manager communicate using a communication link;  
means for determining the storage needs of the customer  
means for selecting a self-storage unit that can accommodate the customer's storage needs;  
means for communicating a selected self-storage unit to the customer;  
means for opening an access gate;  
means for viewing the customer through at least one camera as the customer approaches the selected self-storage unit;  
means for opening the selected self-storage unit so that the customer can inspect the communicated self-storage unit; and  
means for establishing a self storage rental agreement between the customer and the self-storage facility.

19. The system of claim 17 wherein the communication link comprises at least one of a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web and video connection.

20. The system of claim 17 wherein the means for finding a self-storage unit further comprises a database search for at least one available self-storage unit.

21. The system of claim 17 wherein the means for opening an access gate further comprises sending signal to a gate access controller interfaced to a telephone network.

22. The system of claim 17 wherein the means for establishing a self storage rental agreement further comprises a rental agreement drop box for depositing completed rental agreement forms.

23. A system for renting a self-storage unit comprising:

a customer service site comprising an audio visual communication system for establishing communication between a manager and a customer of a self storage business; and

a gate access controller for allowing the customer entrance to a self-storage unit comprising at least one self-storage unit.